

# SOURCE OF INFECTION WITH GONORRHOEA IN VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS\*

BY

M. MARY BEVERIDGE

*The Royal Hospital, Sheffield*

This retrospective study of the case notes of 342 men attending the Royal Hospital, and the Royal Infirmary, Sheffield, with gonorrhoea in 1961, was undertaken in the hope that worthwhile data applicable to the control of gonorrhoea might be found. Four men who acquired their infection homosexually were omitted from the study.

The latest national figures available for England and Wales (1960) show ethnic groups as follows, U.K.-born 50 per cent., West Indians 25 per cent., all others 25 per cent. Table I shows the findings in the present series.

TABLE I  
ETHNIC GROUPS

	No.	Per cent.
U.K.-born .. .. .	69	20
West Indians .. .. .	127	37
Pakistanis and Adenese .. .. .	121	35
Others (Chinese, Africans, Indians, Irish)	25	8
Total .. .. .	342	100

As regards the place of meeting the consort, Laird and Morton (1959) have shown that, with increasing control of the spread of gonorrhoea in smaller towns, the proportion of locally-acquired infections fell until "other than local" sources predominated in a proportion of 4 to 1. Our figures (Table II) emphasize how difficult is the problem of control in the industrial city, with a large female reservoir of infection. Of those patients giving positive information, three out of every five acquired the infection locally.

\* Received for publication February 21, 1962.

TABLE II  
PLACE OF MEETING SOURCE OF INFECTION

Source of Infection	Ethnic Group				Total
	U.K.-born	West Indians	Pakistanis and Adenese	Others	
Sheffield .. .. .	23	70	70	9	172
Outside Sheffield ..	28	40	35	12	115
Not Known .. .. .	18	17	16	4	55
Total .. .. .	69	127	121	25	342

West Indian, Pakistani, and Adenese immigrants are found to spend an occasional weekend in another large city, accommodated by relatives or fellow countrymen. Part of the entertainment is apparently to invite local girls to join the parties. Contacts from such sources are usually impossible to trace. The men have little idea of the temporary address where they stayed, or even the Christian names of the girls concerned. Descriptions of such consorts are often unhelpful.

The generally-accepted definition of a prostitute is one who, for money or for kind, habitually and with a variety of men indulges in sexual intercourse. It is easier of course to define the true prostitute than the promiscuous "good-time" girl. The British Co-operative Group of the Medical Society for the Study of Venereal Diseases (1956) showed that, in 1954, 36 per cent. of men with gonorrhoea in cities and large towns were infected by prostitutes. Unfortunately the report did not define a "prostitute". The men concerned were almost exclusively U.K.-born. Laird (1957) showed that in Manchester 34 per

cent. of men with gonorrhoea paid money, while 22 per cent. paid in kind.

Table III shows that 15 per cent. of the men in the present series paid money, while 12 per cent. paid in kind. The difference may be explained by the high proportion of West Indians in this Sheffield series and the small number of these men who admitted paying in money or in kind.

TABLE III  
PAYMENT OF CONSORT

Method of Payment	Ethnic Group				Total
	U.K.-born	West Indians	Pakistanis and Adenese	Others	
Money . . . .	5	9	34	4	52
In Kind . . . .	7	13	17	4	41
Free . . . . .	28	80	42	7	157
Not Known . . .	29	25	28	10	92
Total . . . . .	69	127	121	25	342

Few recent studies have been made regarding the place of meeting with a man's source of infection. Laird (1958) made reference to the situation as he found it in Manchester, where three-quarters of the men in his series met their consort in the street or in a public house. His findings, of course, concern the situation in Manchester before the introduction of the Street Offences Act (August, 1959).

Information about the meeting place was available in less than half of the cases in the Sheffield study; 55 per cent. of them met their consorts in the street or public house (Table IV).

TABLE IV  
METHOD OF MEETING CONSORT

Place of Meeting	Ethnic Group				Total	
	U.K.-born	West Indians	Pakistanis and Adenese	Others		
Street . . . .	2	5	23	—	30	95
Public House	13	36	12	4	65	
"Call Girl" . .	—	3	14	2	19	74
Other . . . . .	11	22	18	4	55	
Not Known	43	61	54	15		173
Total . . . . .	69	127	121	25		342

The heading "other place" (Table IV) includes cinema, café, club, dance hall, and house party. It must be noted, however, that adequate information as regards meeting place was not available in more than half of our cases.

One feature not noted previously in British literature is what we in Sheffield have termed the "call girl". She does in fact call at the door. The fee mentioned by men has rarely exceeded 20s. One patient stated that the girl arrived to "do washing". He did in fact pay her but it could not be determined for which service. "Call girls" frequently come from other towns and cities, Hull and Nottingham being the most frequently named. One girl who admitted to this practice stated that she had escaped from Nottingham where she had been beaten up following a Teddy-gang fight. She certainly had multiple scars on her arms. On arrival in Sheffield she had received addresses from a Pakistani. Her clientele, she claimed, consisted of eighteen Moslems whom she visited weekly. Many such girls appear to be "on tour", commuting it seems between Hull and Liverpool and stations between. Many of them know each other and exchange addresses of clients. Their hasty departure from any locality often appears to coincide with accusations regarding infection. At one time we were so impressed by the regularity of these "tours" as to think them centrally controlled. There has been no proof of this.

The Pakistani-Adenese group rarely drink alcohol, indeed the Koran forbids it. Recently it has been noted that a few Moslems are now venturing into the public houses. Perhaps they are being slowly Anglicized. Strict non-consumption of alcohol denies the Moslem access to the social life of the local community and indeed this may well have prompted and accelerated the growth of this "call girl" system. Whether it will increase further is a matter for conjecture.

The West Indian group appears to use the public house as a rendezvous almost to the same extent as the natives. Before the enactment of the Street Offences Bill it was well known in Sheffield, as elsewhere, that the women would be found in the street outside the pub. They are now more frequently found inside. In a high proportion of cases the West Indian does not admit to paying, even in kind, *e.g.* by buying the girl a drink. Indeed his fine command of English, natural charm, and 300 years' association with the British way of life, have given him a fine sense of private enterprise.

Native born citizens formed only 20 per cent. of our cases in 1961, compared with 40 per cent. in 1958, and 36 per cent. in 1960. In contrast with the two other ethnic groups, the native citizens' behaviour shows little change from that noted in many other studies. The consort is usually a casual pick-up not infrequently on the street or in a pub. Exposure to infection is a "spur of the moment" affair. Payment in money or kind is not unusual, and travel

plays a part as is seen by the high proportion of those infected "outside Sheffield" (see Table II).

#### Summary

Three ethnic groups of males suffering from gonorrhoea have been studied: native-born citizens, West Indians, and Pakistani-Adenese. Differences exist in regard to their sources of infection, which are largely determined by early environmental conditioning. A "call girl" system operating in Sheffield is noted and briefly described.

Thanks are due to Dr. R. S. Morton for his helpful criticism.

#### REFERENCES

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#### Les sources d'infection blennorragique chez certains groupes ethnologiques

##### RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur a étudié trois groupes ethnologiques de mâles atteints de blennorragie: les citoyens du Royaume-Uni, les immigrants des Indes Occidentales, et les immigrants d'Aden et du Pakistan.

Les différentes sources d'infection chez ces hommes sont largement déterminées par le milieu des jeunes années. On décrit un système de "call girl" actuellement en opération parmi les prostituées de Sheffield.